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The Evolution and Challenges of the Danish Civil Service System¹⁾

Morten Balle Hansen *

Abstract

In this article a descriptive analysis of the evolution and current challenges of the Danish civil service system is given. The focus is on the state administration. Theories of path-dependency and the transnational diffusion of ideas inform the empirical analysis. The broad features of the long-term history of the Danish civil service system are analyzed. The basic characteristics of the current internal labor market of the civil service are analyzed as well as some recent changes in the system. Issues of politicization of the civil service are discussed and public opinion concerning the civil service is examined. The Danish civil service system has been characterized by long-term gradual evolution and adoption of many of the prevailing institutions in medieval and modern European state administration. This adaptation to prevailing trends has been predominantly characterized by integration or coexistence with previous institutions and rarely if ever by radical rapid abandonment of previous traditions

INTRODUCTION

This article deals with the civil service system in Denmark. From an institutional perspective a civil service system may be defined as “mediating institutions that mobilize human resources in the service of the affairs of the state in a given territory” (van der Meer 2011). They are important because they form a basic constituent part of our systems of government. Though civil systems include all levels of government (e.g. state, regions and local government) the focus of this article is on the Danish state administration.

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A comparatively old and small country in Northern Europe, Denmark has developed its civil service system gradually by adopting and translating a number of European trends into already existing Danish institutions, rather than by abruptly abandoning previous institutions.

Denmark covers an area of 43,098 square kilometers, excluding Greenland and the Faroe Islands, which are self-governing parts of the Kingdom of Denmark. Denmark has 5,511,451 inhabitants (2009 estimate, excluding Greenland and the Faroe Islands) and is a constitutional monarchy with a democratic parliamentary one-chamber system of government. It is a homogenous country in religious and ethnic terms with around 91 % ethnic Danes and around 83 % Lutheran Christian members of the Danish state church.

Although the monarch (Margrethe the second) *formally* possesses executive power, this power is strictly ceremonial. Executive authority is exercised by the government lead by the Prime Minister (statsministeren) who appoints the other ministers that collectively make up the government. These ministers are responsible to the Danish Parliament (Folketinget).

The Danish parliament is the national legislature. It has the ultimate legislative authority according to the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty. The parliament consists of 175 members from Denmark plus two from Greenland and two from the Faroe Islands. The Danish political system has traditionally generated coalitions. Most Danish post-war governments have been minority coalitions ruling with the support of non-government parties.

The Danish civil service is organized in a state administration, five regions (since 2007), and 98 municipalities (since 2007). The primary responsibility of the regions is to manage the health care system, especially the hospitals, although part of this responsibility has been handed over to the municipalities. The municipalities have become the primary service providers in the Danish welfare state and are responsible for the provision of a number of services such as childcare, primary schools, eldercare, culture, city planning and road maintenance and construction.

Around 30 % of the Danish workforce of 2.92 million people (2008, Statistics Denmark) work in the public sector, the vast majority in the 98 municipalities (271 before 2007) and in the healthcare system, which is organized in the five

regions (14 counties before 2007). Of those working in the public sector, around 131,000 full-time employees work in public administration of whom around 68,000 work in the central administration of the state (2008, Statistics Denmark).

This article will primarily focus on the civil service system of the state administration. The analysis is informed by historical institutionalism (Rothstein 1998; Thelen 1999) and its notion of path dependency and by sociological institutionalism and its focus on the diffusion of ideas (Meyer, Boli, Thomas, and Ramirez 1997) as well as its earlier emphasis on institutions as natural self-grown systems (Scott 2001; Selznick 1949).

In what follows, a primarily descriptive analysis of essential dimensions of the civil service system is provided. First, the broad features of the long-term history of the Danish civil service system are analyzed. Second, the basic characteristics of the current internal labor market of the civil service are analyzed as well as some recent changes in the system. Third, issues of politicization of the civil service are discussed. Fourth, issues concerning the representativeness of the civil service are analyzed. Fifth, public opinion concerning the civil service is examined, and finally, some concluding remarks are given.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM

The history of Denmark is deeply embedded in the history of Europe in general and the Nordic countries in particular. Especially the history, language and culture of Denmark, Norway and Sweden are closely intertwined. For more than 400 years (until 1814), Norway was part of the Kingdom of Denmark. For centuries in the medieval ages Sweden and Denmark fought wars over who should hold the upper hand in the Baltic region. In the 19th century, however, after the Napoleonic wars, it became clear that Denmark had lost, and after the 1864 defeat to Bismarck's Germany, Denmark was reduced to its smallest size since it was constituted as a kingdom. The common language and culture and also a cultural and political movement called Scandinavism (or Nordism) in the latter part of the 19th century have provided an important background for the easy diffusion of ideas between the Scandinavian countries, which has contributed to the development of the Danish central administration.

Denmark was constituted as a kingdom in around the year 900 and the evolution

of the Danish central administrative system was for centuries closely related to the royal institution. In the medieval ages, after the era of the Vikings, the royal institution gradually evolved from a weak and semi-elected institution ruling through an influential nobility into an absolute monarchy with a powerful king. Absolute monarchism was formally institutionalized in 1660 (Jespersen, Petersen, and Tamm 2000). The education of nobles serving the king was not formal, but often quite sophisticated, including years of foreign service in order to get acquainted with administrative practices in other countries (Knudsen 2003). Although the old nobility retained strong influence in the central administration, other social classes increasingly entered the central administration, which gradually transformed from a collegial type of rule into a Weberian type of bureaucracy (Weber 1947) with strong loyal ties to the king and the state. In 1821, having a degree in jurisprudence became a formal requirement for obtaining a higher civil service position. In 1848, just before the first democratic constitution, the state administration was organized in seven ministries: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of War (from 1905, the elected politician in charge was addressed as the Minister of Defence); the Ministry of the Navy; the Ministry of the Interior; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Finance; and the Ministry of Church and Education. Thus, when the absolute monarchy became a constitutional monarchy in 1849, the central administration was organized in seven ministries and staffed by members of the legal profession, still to some extent with a family background in the old Danish nobility, but with a distinct civil service loyalty to the state and the king.

The latter part of the 19th century in Denmark was, as in many other European countries, characterized by a political mobilization of the former lower and middle classes (farmers, workers, etc.) and later the women. A transformation from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy (1849) and later into a parliamentary democracy (1901), in which the government is held accountable to and can be dismissed by the parliament, took place in these formative years. Many of the institutions that remain essential to Danish society and the civil service were formed in these decades, including the political parties that were most important throughout the 20th century. The development of what we today perceive as obvious rights in a democratic society took decades as can be illustrated by the gradual changes in the right to vote in national and local elections. In the first democratic constitution from 1849, which to a large extent was copied from the Belgian constitution of 1831, only men over 30 and with a

property above a certain value were allowed to vote. Women were allowed to vote in municipal elections in 1908 and in national elections in 1915. The latest change in this part of the Danish democratization process took place in 1978, when the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 years. The societal democratization process in these decades had a gradual impact on the ethos of the Danish civil service. From 1849, when civil servants entered the civil service, they swore loyalty to both the constitution and the king, but gradually the social bond to the royal institution was loosened and replaced by the social bond to parliamentary democracy and to society at large. Durkheim's concept of organic solidarity (Durkheim 1984) seems adequate to capture the type of *esprit de corps* that gradually replaced the royal institution. Formally speaking, the oath to the king was replaced in 1919 by a written promise by all civil servants in the state to defend the democratic constitution and fulfill all obligations of civil servants, symbolically stressing the democratization of the civil service (Knudsen 2000).

At the beginning of the 20th century, Denmark could still by and large be characterized as a night watchman state with a total public expenditure share of the total GDP of around 10-12 % (Christensen 2000). Nonetheless, the seeds were sown for the later universal welfare state during the social reform of the 1890s, inspired by Bismarck's social reform in Germany (Petersen 1985; Ringsmose and Hansen 2005). Thus, by extension it was a relatively small civil service compared to what later came into existence after the Second World War and the growth of the universal welfare state. The small size of the central state administration in these decades can be illustrated by a cutback in the number of civil servants in 1870. The parliament reduced the number of department heads from 20 to 13, the number of office heads from 50 to 33 and the number of principals from 99 to 63 (Bogason 2008).

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the public expenditure share of GDP gradually rose to around 20-22 % after the Second World War. Then, in the latter part of the century, the public sector rapidly expanded its scope. For instance, around 11 % of the Danish workforce were employed in the public sector in 1950 while close to 30 % were public employees 50 years later at the beginning of the 21st century. Again this trend seems to be an almost global phenomenon. The 20th century, particularly the latter half of the century, became the century of public sector and civil service growth in most countries including the USA (Tanzi and Schuknecht 2000), but especially in northwestern Europe and in particular,

Scandinavia (Esping-Andersen 1990).

Changes in the internal organization of the central state administration from the first democratic constitution in 1849 to the organization of today can be divided into a number of different periods (Bogason 2008) according to different criteria, but a four epoch-classification, which is closely related to the overall evolution of the universal Danish welfare state, seems most reasonable:

- 1849-1890: the consolidation of constitutional democracy;
- 1891-1945: the increasing democratization and slow expansion of the welfare state;
- 1946-1980: the rapid expansion of the welfare state;
- 1981-2009: the reorganization and reduction of public sector growth.

Besides capturing the broader trend, this subdivision reflects changes in the organization of the central administration reasonably well. Broadly speaking, the expansion of the state into a universal welfare state corresponds to a long-term tendency to increase the number of ministries, from the original seven ministries in 1849 to the 19 ministries in the 2009 administration. Many of the new ministries were organized around tasks originally placed in the former Ministry of the Interior, which, due to the increasing activities of the state in society, had become too large and complex. Two of the ministries established in 1849, the Ministry of War and the Ministry of the Marine, were merged into the Ministry of Defense in 1950, but otherwise the old ministries from 1849 survived, although some of their functions changed over the years.

INTERNAL LABOUR MARKET

The last section laid out the early evolutionary patterns of the Danish civil service with a focus on the central administration. Until 1660 the nobility played a major role, but their role gradually diminished in importance as the law profession gradually grew in importance; in 1821, a university law degree became a formal requirement for advancement to higher positions in the civil service. In the latter 19th and especially the 20th century, the democratization of society increasingly paved the way for lower classes to enter the state administration, although the vast majority still came from privileged backgrounds (Knudsen 2000). In terms of educational qualifications, top civil servant positions have increasingly been held

by generalists rather than specialists (e.g. doctors, engineers, architects, etc.). Among the generalists, people with legal training have played a major role in the central administration throughout the 20th century, but they were increasingly challenged (or supplemented) by academics with other educational backgrounds. From the 1930s, economists entered the central administration, many of them inspired by a Keynesian understanding of the role of the state in society. From the 1960s, political scientists and later other types of social scientists entered the civil service, which today to a large extent employs academics with one of these three types of educational background. Statistically, these trends can be illustrated by changes in the educational background of top civil servants within the central administration (both departments and agencies). The total number of top civil servants in the central administration increased from 45 in 1935 to 244 in 1997. From 1935 to 1997 the share of generalists increased from 47 to 75 percent, while the share of specialists decreased from 38 to 21 percent. The share of staff members from the legal profession remained reasonably stable at 40 percent in 1935 and 43 percent in 1997, while the share of economists and other social scientists increased from 7 percent in 1935 to 32 percent in 1997 (Finansministeriet 1998).

In what kind of formal structure do civil servants work in the central administration? Internally, the ministries are hierarchically organized according to a unitary principle in which the minister is responsible for all activities within the ministry. Due to the increasing number and complexity of tasks faced by the civil service system, this unitary ministerial system has increasingly become overloaded and a number of commissions have suggested reforms and changes in the organization of the civil service since the Second World War (Christoffersen 2000). There has been a lot of variation over time and between ministries, but in general, since the 1950s, most ministries have been hierarchically (vertically) organized in two (until the early 1990s, three) types of organizational units:

- 1) One department with direct access to the minister, and with the primary task of providing the minister with policy advice;
- 2) One or more directorates (agencies) with more specialized tasks and with less frequent relations to the minister and varying autonomy; and, until the mid-1990s,

3) General directorates with even more autonomy to solve specialized major tasks such as the national railways and the postal system.

These latter directorates were removed from the ministerial system in the 1990s and reorganized into different types of state enterprises or “quangos”, reducing the number of civil servants working in the central state administration substantially. While the reconstruction of the general directorates into agencies can clearly be seen as representing a general trend within New Public Management, this is not the case for the directorates/agencies. Although they have varying degrees of autonomy, they are still part of the ministerial hierarchy and as such not a case of the agencification trend of New Public Management, or at most, a very restricted, moderate version of it (Christensen and Laegreid 2007).

Table 1: Number of ministries, departments and agencies

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1999	2005
Number							
Ministries	17	16	19	21	22	20	19
Departments	28	29	28	28	26	20	19
Agencies	33	31	34	48	50	52	56

Note: Up to and including 1990 the general directorates of the state railways and the post and telegraph service counted as departments.

Source: Finansloven, various volumes.

What kind of educational background do state civil servants have? Informally academics with a university degree in law, economics or another type of social science have an almost de facto monopoly on positions in the departments, that is, the units at the top of the hierarchy that provide policy advice to the minister. For instance almost all of the Danish permanent secretaries – the top civil servants in the Danish ministries - from 1950 to 2008 had a university degree in either law, economics or political science (Hansen and Salomonsen 2011). The one exception is the Ministry of Defense, in which a certain number of the civil servants are officers with a military education. The available statistical evidence of educational background for lower ranking academics in the departments indicates the same tendencies as for the top civil servants. From 1985 to 1995 the number of academics in the departments increased from 918 to 1768 in the three most common positions (principals, consultants and office clerks). Within this group, the share of members of the legal profession decreased from 57 percent in 1985 to 44 percent in 1995, the share of economists decreased from 22 to 18 percent, the share with a degree in political science or public administration doubled from 8 to

16 percent, the share of other social scientists increased from 5 to 9 percent and the share with an academic background other than the social sciences (primarily the humanities) increased from 7 to 13 percent (Finansministeriet 1998). When these figures are compared to the statistics on top civil servants mentioned previously, support is found for the widely held notion that for those wishing to pursue a career to the top in the departments of the state administration, the informal requirement is a university Masters degree in the social sciences and preferably in law, economics or political science/public administration, although there have been exceptions (Christensen and Ibsen 1991). This is not the case in the directorates, whose tasks often require more specialized knowledge of, for instance, the environment, health, farming or the military, but even here, generalists are more frequently attaining top positions. While the civil servants in the departments can be called generalists in the sense that they do not have detailed expert knowledge of the substance of cases, a varying share of the civil servants in the directorates/agencies have more case specific expert backgrounds in, for instance, the health profession, education, engineering or farming.

On what terms are the civil servants hired? Historically, the Danish civil service rested on distinct civil service principles resembling the Weberian ideal type (Christensen 2009; Weber 1947). Employees had civil service status with lifelong tenure, government paid pensions and economic guarantees against being fired or transferred to an inferior position. Although remains of this system can still be found in the contracts of the top ministerial department heads and probably also in the informal rules of appropriateness characterizing the central administration employment policy, the system has fundamentally changed since the 1950s. As public sector growth increased, the stiff legal and political regulation of the number of the civil service positions became inadequate. This was to a large extent due to the creation of positions that were filled with people appointed according to a collective agreement with the civil service unions rather than the legislation governing the civil service (Christensen 2009). This practice evolved in the 1960s and led to the reform of the civil service legislation in 1968. By this time, practice had already been changed so that all new appointments of people with an academic background were based on contracts negotiated in collective agreements (Bruun 2000). In the early 1970s, new legislation opened up for fixed-term contracts in managerial positions in the central administration, but this option was rarely exercised until the 1990s, when it became the norm rather than the exception that top executive positions in both central and local government

were based on fixed-term contracts. With few notable exceptions such as the previously mentioned ministerial department heads, individually negotiated fixed-term contracts with performance measures related to salary have become the standard for higher ranking managers in the Danish public sector. This system gradually gained prominence in the 1990s, was formally institutionalized in 1998, and has since then been adopted almost universally but with significant variations in its practical execution and importance.

Somewhat independent of the tendency to use fixed-term contracts has been a higher turnover of top managers in the public sector. Increasingly, top managers are fired or removed from positions by their political superiors both in local government and the central administration. A practice has evolved in Denmark since the 1970s of an increasing share of permanent secretaries and agency heads, for one reason or another, leaving their posts after, on average, less than ten years' service. This is not related to the use of fixed-term contracts. Rather, in the central administration it results from ministers being increasingly inclined to use their authority for discretionary firings, and from much higher interdepartmental mobility than in the past (Christensen 2004).

The introduction of individually negotiated performance pay and fixed-term contracts for managers in the public sector has probably been one of the mechanisms that has significantly raised the relative salaries of public top managers as compared to other groups of public employees. From 1982 to 2000, the department head /clerk pay ratio, calculated as the average total salary for top civil servants as compared to the average total salary for a central government-employed clerk, rose from 2.9 to 4.1 in the Danish central administration (Gregory and Christensen 2004). Although this ratio has increased substantially in the 1990s, the roughly comparable ratio for New Zealand was 14.9 in 2000 (Gregory and Christensen 2004), confirming the overall picture of Denmark as a relatively egalitarian society with a relatively low difference between high and low salaries within the civil service.

POLITICIZATION

The Danish civil service is fundamentally a merit bureaucracy in the Weberian sense (Christensen 2004; Weber 1947), with career civil servants hired based on their professional and managerial merits and not on their political affiliation. Until recently, no civil servants were hired based on their political affiliation, but

since the late 1990s a few 'spin doctors', called 'special advisors', have entered the central administration. Unlike the vast majority of Danish civil servants, these special advisors have been hired by the minister based on political criteria as well as merit, and they are usually members of the same party as the minister. And unlike other employees, they leave the office when the minister leaves or the government resigns. But so far these special advisors are the exception that confirms the rule. They are few in number – no more than one or two per department – they are integrated in the hierarchy of the department and thus subordinate to the department head, and their responsibility is clearly delimited to public relations and some functions related to the party of the minister.

Despite the merit principle, there has been a growing demand from the political masters to get political advice from the departments in the state administration. Thus the principle of neutrality, in the sense of restricting the civil service to giving sheer technical advice, has been challenged – if it ever was practiced. Although such changes are difficult to substantiate in empirical research, almost all accounts of the interaction between the political and the administrative system in the Danish central administration (and to some extent also in local government) point towards an increased politicization of the civil service. Not in the sense of interfering in party politics but in the sense of elaborating long-term strategies for the policy of the public sector in general and the different sub sectors in particular. On the basis of research conducted in the 1970s and 1990s, Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen has, for instance, provided an estimate of changes in the politicization of the civil service (Christensen, 2004a, pp. 32-34) from the 1960s until the late 1990s. Grønnegård distinguishes between on the one hand, ministers' roles as members of the political executive with managerial and executive decision-making responsibilities, relations to parliament, international relations, and relations to interest organisations and on the other hand, ministers' roles as party leaders with public relations, constituency relations, and campaigning and other party-related duties. Like all the tasks of the political executive, the scope of the advisory role of the civil service has been expanded in terms of both policy analysis and advice, and political strategy and tactics. As for the ministers' roles as party leaders, the advisory role of the civil service in terms of public relations has also been strengthened substantially. The above-mentioned 'special advisers' are part of that trend.

As in other countries, the tension between the old normative ideal of a neutral

civil service and the pressure from politicians to formulate strategic policies and provide more specific political advice has caused concern. As a policy issue, it came to the fore especially in connection with a major scandal that caused the resignation of the government in 1993. Since then, different ethical and practical aspects of this tension have been the subject of reports from various collective actors such as government commissions (Finansministeriet 1998), the primary civil service association of academically trained public employees (DJØF 1993), journalists (Groes-Petersen, Hilton, Jensen, Løkkegaard, Mesterton, Qvortrup, and Aae 1993), academics (Larsen 1996) and top civil servants (Forumforoffentligtopledelse 2005). The tension remains, but a mutual understanding seems to have evolved among politicians and civil servants concerning the delicate balance and the formal and informal rules of the game, and currently there seems to be no crisis of legitimacy for the Danish civil service.

REPRESENTATIVENESS

Welfare state researchers sometimes distinguish between “welfare” and “warfare” states (Wilensky 1975). Warfare states are characterized by a comparatively high military share of public employment, while welfare states are characterized by a high fraction of social, health and educational employment. In modern times, the Danish public sector has never been a warfare state (Andersen, Christensen, and Pallesen 2008), and since the welfare sectors have traditionally been characterized by a high share of female employment “... even in the early post-war period, women dominated the Danish public sector” (Andersen et al., 2008, p.258) – at least in number, it should be added. Thus, in 1960, around 60 percent of public employees were females. Since the 1960s, the traditionally male-dominated parts of the public sector (infra-structure, the military, and law enforcement) have stagnated in terms of numbers of employees, while the social, health care and educational functions have expanded substantially. Thus in 2000 around 68 percent of public employees were females (Andersen, Christensen, and Pallesen 2008). This female share of public employment is, however, hierarchically very unevenly distributed. In short, top managers are usually – and until recently, almost exclusively – men. For instance, of the 19 department heads in the Danish central administration in the fall of 2009, only two were female. And among the 98 municipal top managers – the city managers – in the fall of 2008, only around 9 % were female (Hansen 2009). This uneven distribution of hierarchical power in terms of gender has been a political and administrative issue since the early

1970s, which saw the first massive political mobilization along gender lines. Today, increasing the share of female managers within the public sector is recognized, at least rhetorically, as a major challenge. There is disagreement about the means to accomplish such a goal. One suggestion has been positive discrimination (affirmative action). So far however, the dominant viewpoint has been that such a policy would be counterproductive and a disservice to females. Managers should be hired solely on the basis of Weberian criteria such as their professional and managerial qualifications, and not because of their gender or other demographic characteristics. But this viewpoint is certainly under attack these years and if the share of females in higher managerial positions does not change substantially it is not unlikely that some kind of positive discrimination will be implemented.

Besides gender, the representation of the different ethnic groups within the civil service has been a political and administrative issue since the early 1990s. Until recently, Denmark has been a very homogenous society comprising almost exclusively ethnic Danes. This has changed over the past two or three decades and despite a very restrictive immigration policy since 2001, Denmark is gradually becoming a more multiethnic society. This long-term trend has triggered a number of very salient political controversies since the mid-1980s and has changed the Danish national political landscape. In terms of the civil service, it is now a priority to increase the share of employees with another ethnic background than Danish.

Both the gender and the ethnic issues have been relatively high on the agenda for the Danish Civil service and will probably remain so. Although the Danish civil service generally has high legitimacy, both issues, especially the ethnic one, may cause some concern for the future legitimacy of the Danish civil service.

PUBLIC OPINION

Although with some variation across sectors and over time, the overall tendency has been a comparatively high trust and support for the institutions of the Danish welfare state among the Danish population. For instance, Gilley (Gilley 2006) constructed three measures of state legitimacy on the basis of different types of data including the World Value Survey and found that Denmark was the country with the highest rate of state legitimacy among 72 countries, followed by

Norway and the Netherlands. Looking at Eurobarometer data as well as the World Value Surveys of 1981 and 1990, Derlien and Rouban (Derlien and Rouban 2008) also report that Danish citizens generally display the comparatively highest trust in their national institutions. On the basis of the World Value Survey and the Eurobarometer for four years (1981, 1990, 1997 and 1999) and comparing 14 different European countries, they note that 'Danish citizens displayed the strongest trust in their national institutions and slightly below average trust in European Union institutions' (Derlien & Rouban, 2008, p. 152).

However, the trust in the institutions of the Danish state varies significantly between the different sectors and functional tasks of the state institutions. According to the World Value Surveys of 1981 and 1990, Danes have very high confidence in the police, the legal system and the education system of the state (Derlien and Rouban 2008). Between 79 and 89 percent of the Danish respondents in 1990 had 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in these institutions while the average of European countries was significantly lower.

The confidence in the civil service was, however, significantly lower – 51 percent reported 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in the civil service in 1990. This lower confidence in the civil service as compared to other state institutions seems to be a general trend across countries. The level of trust in the civil service in Denmark in 1990 was 7 percent higher than the European average and only outdistanced by Ireland, where 59 percent of respondents expressed high trust in the civil service in 1990 (Derlien and Rouban 2008).

The comparatively high trust in the civil service compared to other European countries (albeit lower than the trust in most other state institutions) is confirmed in the Eurobarometer surveys of 1997 and 1999. The average share respondents indicating high trust in the civil service among EU 15 countries increased from 40 percent in 1997 to 42 percent in 1999 (Derlien and Rouban 2008). In Denmark the share diminished from 58 percent in 1997 to 50 percent in 1999, but despite this significant decrease in trust, the percentage of respondents with high trust was still significantly higher than the EU 15 average.

Thus, to conclude, there is comparatively high support among the Danish population for the Danish state institutions in general, but significant variation between institutions. There are, however, some recent trends that suggest a less

harmonic picture of the relation between parts of the Danish population and the Danish state institutions in the future. Denmark has not been among the most successful countries in coping with the gradual transition towards a multiethnic society. Refugees and immigrants, especially from the Middle East, have had difficulties entering the labor market, and there are signs of distrust from significant groups of 'second generation' Danes towards the Danish state institutions. An attempt to improve the 'management of diversity' in the Danish society has certainly been made and is one of the buzzwords in contemporary Danish public administration. It remains to be seen whether these attempts will succeed or whether the emerging cleavages will expand into more polarized relations between the state and significant parts of the Danish population.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Danish civil service system has been characterized by long-term gradual evolution and adoption of many of the prevailing institutions in medieval and modern European state administration. This adaptation to prevailing trends has been predominantly characterized by integration or coexistence with previous institutions and rarely if ever by radical rapid abandonment of previous traditions. For instance, the influence of old institutions such as the nobility decreased gradually.

Since the 1950s, the Danish civil service has rapidly expanded its scope beyond a system resembling a Weberian ideal type bureaucracy. At that time, the limited number of public employees had civil service status with lifelong tenure, government paid pensions and economic guarantees against being fired or transferred to an inferior position. Although remains of this system can be found, the overall character of the system has changed dramatically. Today the vast majority of top civil servants are hired on fixed-term contracts with strong or weak elements of performance measures. The Weberian civil service system of the 1950s have been substituted by collectively negotiated contracts made with the major civil service unions and by individually negotiated contracts for the top civil servants that are also strongly influenced by the unions. Legally speaking, public state employees can be fired relatively easy, although this happens less often than in the private sector, and the life-long tenure from the 1950s has by and large been substituted by the "flexicurity" system.

According to all empirical measures, the Danish civil service has a comparatively high legitimacy despite challenges related to politicization and representation in recent years. Especially the gradual transformation of the Danish society into a multiethnic society poses a challenge to the civil service as well as to the politicians, and Danish society has had some difficulties in adapting. Thus, the management of diversity is high on the agenda and it remains to be seen how the civil service will cope with this challenge in the future.

Notes

- 1) This is a revised version of Hansen, M. B. 2011. "The Development and Current Features of the Danish Civil Service System" in *Civil Service Systems In Western Europe*, edited by F. M. van der Meer. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

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APPENDIX

Table 2: Number of employees in the national civil service

Year	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1999	2005	2008
Departments	1830	2446	4099	4645	5096	5020	4329	
Directorates	14699	19486	48836	57306	66810	65000	63410	
General directorates	30735	32008	38764	49833	55214			
Number of employees in the Danish ministries	47264	53940	91699	111784	127210	70020	67739	68304